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Jon Remmerde

### **Third Day of Spring**

I went out to the Oregon desert  
Sky drifts east.  
Soft grey cumulus clouds  
big as Oregon towns,  
populated by storms of rain  
separated by clear blue  
rivers of sunshine.

I walked across soft volcanic soil  
damp as springtime.  
Last year's bleached grasses  
pale.  
New green grass  
busies itself with living  
grows  
from the base of every clump.  
Tiny dicotyledons of green optimism  
sprout in open soil  
and green moss,  
spring upward.

Northwest,  
on Shoot Butte,  
a twenty-two pistol,  
a three-fifty-seven magnum,  
and a sixteen-gauge shotgun  
pop, roar, and hammer insistently  
against late afternoon.  
Thirty thousand feet above,  
impatient jet transports  
noisily suck oxygen to carbon dioxide  
every nine minutes  
as inadequately-civilized humans  
rush toward oblivion.

I carry this advantage of advancing age;  
I walked the Oregon Desert

when weeks passed without shooting,  
airplanes were rare occurrences,  
and sounds of wild animals  
were the only sounds I heard  
above  
the soft passage of my own feet.

Shooters pack their weapons away  
in large pickups  
and drive down from Shoot Butte  
toward an evening in town.  
We have a long moment  
when only wild animals, new green plants,  
blue sky, silently traveling white clouds,  
and I own the Oregon Desert.

Meadow larks sing around me.  
Quail call softly from hidden gatherings.  
A bluebird flies past and stops to sing.  
A flicker calls somewhere far off.  
Coyotes yip, yip, yip,  
break to springtime song.  
A rabbit startles away  
through green-growing grasses.  
Two ravens circle each other  
in aerobatic celebration of spring,  
high up  
in the drifting blue and white sky.  
a red-tailed hawk soars  
like a small, fast cloud.

Life's eternal power.  
fills spring of the year.

Wild animals,  
spring plants  
and I  
build future  
summers,  
autumns,  
winters,  
springs.